

## **Missiles Into Sunflowers** **Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER**

Delivering a lecture at a peace symposium sponsored by the Soka Gakkai youth division in Nagasaki, Japan, on Feb. 23, Dr. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, declared that the only way to establish a nuclear-weapons-free world is through the power and solidarity of the people, not just political power. He called on young people to continue striving for peace until every last nuclear warhead is removed from the face of the earth.

Earlier, on Feb. 21, in a ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, a Soka Gakkai youth leader presented Dr. Krieger with boxes containing 13 million signatures collected from throughout Japan in support of the peace foundation's Abolition 2000 campaign. The campaign calls on governments to sign by the year 2000 an international treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world within a time-bound framework. In his speech, Dr. Krieger asserted that each signature represents a voice of hope that, when joined together, forms a chorus of hope that can move the world.

After visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki — the two Japanese cities devastated by atomic bombings during World War II — Dr. Krieger met with SGI President Ikeda on Feb. 26 at the Okinawa Training Center in Onnason, Okinawa.

During their discussion, the SGI leader and Dr. Krieger stressed that one of humanity's priorities is to establish a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons — and that it is a goal that requires the concerted effort of ordinary people everywhere. They also agreed to continue their dialogue and publish it later in book form under the title *Choose Hope*.

Dr. Krieger said that the SGI and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation share the same vision for peace. He added that he was most impressed to learn that the Okinawa Training Center — a center for peace — is built on the site of what was once a missile base. Dr. Krieger said he feels reassured that his foundation's antinuclear weapons campaign to "turn missiles into sunflowers" is indeed achievable.

President Ikeda said that it was significant to welcome Dr. Krieger and his wife, Carolee, to Okinawa, a prefecture whose citizens possess a profound love of peace and culture. There was an anecdote, he said, of Napoléon Bonaparte expressing utter incredulity when he heard from an Englishman who had traveled to Okinawan shores in the early 1800s that the people of these islands did not possess weapons of any kind. The SGI leader mentioned the Okinawan expression *nuchi du takara* (life is a treasure), and commented that it indicates a philosophy that cherishes the sanctity of life.

Dr. Krieger said that people tend to forget what a precious treasure life is. If they could appreciate this truth every moment of their lives, then peace could surely be realized. A society that forgets this, he said, is headed for ruin. He also said that Napoléon's reaction was typical of a military mind and also a common way of thinking in the modern world.

Explaining that Buddhism teaches the concept of fundamental darkness inherent in the universe, often personified as the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, the SGI leader said that the struggle to achieve peace will only be successful if people stand up to the destructive forces rampant in the world today. Otherwise, he said, those negative forces will only grow more virulent. Equally important is keeping hope alive and persevering to realize peace, he said. Hope is the key for human happiness and the destiny of our planet, President Ikeda continued.

Dr. Krieger affirmed that hope is a conscious choice: we can choose hope just as we can choose despair, cynicism or anger. People ought to cherish great hope that transcends

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small, egotistic desires, he said.

The SGI leader said that his mentor and second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda shared the belief that science and technology must not be used for destructive purposes. He said that Mr. Toda felt science would never bring happiness to people nor contribute to peace if it focused only on the external realm of life. Only when a firm philosophy of life guides science and technology can they contribute to world peace. The SGI leader also said that the American scientist and peace activist Linus Pauling (1901–94) had avowed that the power of the human spirit is far greater than the evil power of nuclear weapons.

Explaining the Buddhist principle that a single life-moment possesses 3,000 realms, Mr. Ikeda said that people have within their lives the potential to transform not only themselves, but also society and their entire nation. The SGI's peace movement focuses on unlocking that potential from within each person and then forging it into a united force. The solidarity of people awakened in this way constitutes a "new superpower," he said.

Dr. Krieger stated that technology can be used two ways: for good and for evil. But he has found that technology does not have dual purposes in and of itself — how it is used depends on the good or evil in the hearts of those who use it. The question, therefore, is not how do we control science and technology, he said, but how do we change people's hearts. Humankind will perish, he said, if we do not alter our mode of thinking and our system of values.

President Ikeda noted that there is no appropriate way to dispose of plutonium safely. Dr. Krieger added that when governments dismantle nuclear missiles, in most cases is the plutonium is removed from the warheads and stored some place where it can be easily reused for military purposes at any time. He urged people to petition governments to find a way to eliminate nuclear weapons permanently.

Plutonium is not a naturally occurring substance, Dr Krieger said. It is so toxic that exposure to even the smallest amount can cause lung cancer in a short time, and it also has a half-life of tens of thousands of years. Dr. Krieger said that, while he believes scientists will one day find a completely safe way to dispose of plutonium, the best method for now appears to be storage in retrievable containers.

Dr. Krieger explained that plutonium was created by the American nuclear chemist and Nobel laureate Glenn T. Seaborg and his team, and was named after the Greek god of the underworld, Pluto, who is also known as Hades. Mr. Ikeda said that Pluto seems to him very similar in nature to the Devil of the Sixth Heaven in Buddhism that he had mentioned earlier.

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